

# UMANS WITHOUT RIGHTS



*Nicanor León Cotayo*

ARTICLES  
ON THE VIOLATION  
OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
IN THE UNITED STATES

Colección  
**VOZ**





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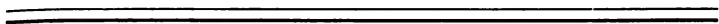
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*To Martin Luther King...*





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## THE STATE DEPARTMENT FORGETS AN ANNEX

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**T**HE U.S. government recently presented its report on the status of human rights in the world last year, with the single exception of the United States.

No one asked for it, but the U.S. State Department drafted a document over 1,000 pages long where harsh charges against Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico and other nations were formulated.

Since the authors of this report did not include their own country among the convicted, perhaps it would be interesting to have a look at the performance of some vital rights there.

U.S. Senator Daniel Moynihan said on September 25, 1985, that one out of every five American children, (i. e., 13.3 million children) live in poverty.

Speaking before Congress, he added that among the persistently poor children, 90% are blacks and those of this race under the age of six suffer from a poverty rate of 51.1%.

The situation of Hispanics was no different.

A few days before Moynihan's address, *The Washington Post* commented that the Hispanic population living in this country is already over 15 million, and was "growing steadily" in size and poverty.

The paper recalled that, according to government figures, 52.2% of Puerto Rican children live under the national poverty line, while 28.4% of Hispanics are in general in the same predicament.

The U.S. Congress Research Service itself, revealed that the indigence rate among Hispanic children is 84% higher than that of the American children.

The study which disclosed these results was commissioned by lawmakers Harold Ford from Tennessee, Charles Rangel from New York and Bill Richardson from New Mexico and it is the appendix of a research study carried out three months earlier regarding poor children in the United States.

Another report drafted by the National Commission of Secondary Studies for Hispanics reported that half of the Hispanic students drop out of school before they complete their studies, and that 40% of the dropouts never reach tenth grade.

This survey was followed by an article published last October 28 in *The New York Times* affirming that registration by students of these minorities is declining throughout the country.



In concluding the interviews of the teachers, *The New York Times* said that the presence of blacks, Hispanics and Indians tends to decline in colleges and universities, due to the increasing costs of education and cuts made by the White House in aid programs. Robert Arwell, president

of the American Education Council told the paper that he trembles when he thinks what it means for a nation that at the end of this century, the minorities will make up one third of its population.

In the case of the American Indians, this issue goes beyond the schools' doors.

As an example among many others, is the case reported by the press regarding one of the "reservations" where 962,000 individuals are grouped: a large number of the million and a half natives who still survive.

### *ILLITERACY*

Over a two-month period, in the "Wind River" reservation in the state of Wyoming in the western area of the country, 10 youngsters committed suicide and nine others were hospitalized away from the village to prevent them from following suit.

In an area of this reservation where 5,345 natives were grouped the suicide rate was 62 times higher than the national average and according to the Indian leader Mark Banks, the unemployment and infant mortality rates of this community "beat all the records."

Victor Golla, an expert in Indian languages from Washington's University explained the drama of this minority saying that they belonged to the warrior societies based on honor, similar to those

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Knights Orders of the Middle Ages but their world had crumbled and what is left are the sad impersonal constructions in a reservation and a barren landscape.

One of the worst problems in the United States is illiteracy.

Sociologist Jonathan Kozol said on May 26, 1985, that one third of the adult American population does not know to read and write and that the United Nations's statistics report that this country holds the 48th place among the literate nations of the world.

Addressing the Annual Convention of the American Bestsellers Association, Kozol also pointed out as an example that the White House devoted US\$1.60 a year per every illiterate in their adult reading programs and that in states such as California, 50 cents a year are spent with similar objectives and that a program in New York which recruited volunteers to fight illiteracy, was eliminated because the federal funds devoted to pay the salaries to a group of employees were suspended.

According to statistics reported by this governmental entity, in the United States there are 25 million individuals who do not know how to read and write nor even read simple reading material. At the same time some other 35 million are barely able to fulfill the minimum requisites of reading.

In mid-1985, other interesting data were reported on poverty, collected by the Congress Census Bureau.

According to these, one out of every five American youngsters under the age of 18 and one out of every four under the age of six, were poor, so in the country there were about 14 million youngsters — 37.8% of the total — who suffered from poverty.

Commenting on the previous issue, the Spanish news agency, EFE, pointed out that the root of the problem was apparently economic, because the United States had never suffered from such a long unemployment period as that of the last five years.

And then it concluded: "...every year more American youngsters die from poverty than from traffic accidents, suicides or cancer."

At the beginning of 1986, the Conference of American Mayors revealed the results of a research study made to test the degree of real indigence suffered in the nation.

The survey showed that the need for shelter and emergency food for the poor had spiralled across the country.



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*LACK OF HOMES*

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The mayors' document stated that welfare benefits and unemployment problems headed the reasons for the persistent hunger in the United States.

The report supporting this point of view, stated that food claims increased 28% while the requests for shelters increased 90% compared to previous periods.

The mayors' concern was justified, among other things, because of the results of a research study carried out by the Disease Control Center based in Atlanta.

Doctor Dixie Snider, a researcher at this Center, revealed that in 1985 there were 1,910 tuberculosis cases in New York City, much higher than the 1,670 cases reported the previous year in the same place.

The Center assessed that the increase of this lung disease could be determined by the large amount of homeless people in this city, exposed to the low temperatures in winter.

Harry Belafonte, an American actor and singer, spoke about this social panorama during a press conference held in Havana where he affirmed that hunger not only existed in Africa but also in his country. He said that there are millions of Americans who presently have very serious problems and mothers who have to beg or rob.



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*SOME NOTES ON AMERICAN PRISONS*

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The AFP office in Washington categorically titled a dispatch which reported on January 2, 1985: "Prisons in the United States resemble hell."

The French news agency commented on the bloody prison riots which had occurred in the states of Virginia and Oklahoma.

In both prisons there were fatalities and injured inmates and the rioters asked for similar demands: better living conditions, proper care and more comfortable facilities.

One of the prisoners in the maximum security jail of Mountsville, Virginia, shouted before the journalists that they wanted to be treated as human beings and not as criminals.

AFP concluded that the risk of death is three times higher in U.S. jails than on highways, due to overpopulations, promiscuity and endemic violence.

This general situation of human rights in the United States stands in contrast to the policy pursued by the Reagan Administration over the last five years.

Over a four-year period, the White House cut 10 billion dollars from welfare and aid programs, resulting in about 1 million fewer recipients, in the last two years, of the supplementary plan for poor babies, children and mothers.

However, this same Republican government spent 1.2 billion dollars in this four-year period in the military sector and, furthermore, Reagan intends to invest US\$26 billion in his "Star War" project in the future.

With such staggering figures, the 50 cents annually devoted to illiterates in California, the panorama of tuberculars who go ground without shelter or food along the snowy streets of New York City or the Indian children who commit suicide out of frustration in the Wind River reservation, seem to be grotesque images from a most irrational and hallucinating sight.

What can the U.S. State Department's writers, who drafted this recent document, say about the status of human rights in the world?

How can these writers, who are alarmed about the alleged violations of human rights in Cuba, explain how our country has solved in 25 years the most crucial problems which still horrify, lend shame and suffering to a nation which has existed for over 200 years?

This is, officials of the American diplomacy, the annex that the State Department forgot to include in its report.

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## POVERTY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

**A**CCORDING to the U.S. Congress, there are about 14 million young people who live in poverty in this country. That means that out of every 100 American teenagers, 38 are affected by this situation.

The Census Bureau of this legislative institution also reported that one out of five American teenagers under the age of 18 and one out of four under the age of six are poor.

The Spanish news agency, EFE, said that in the United States more youngsters die every year from poverty than from traffic accidents, suicides or cancer.

This sad panorama is worse especially among the 26 million people who make up the black population, because as the U.S. Labor Department indicated early last April, 13.9% of its work force is unemployed at present.

A report by the Urban National League indicated that black families suffered from "tremendous tension" and that the proportion of these families

which are headed by women increased from 22% in 1960 to 60% in 1985.

It also indicated that the mother of one out of every four black babies born in 1982 was 19 years old or younger and that almost 90% of these young women were not married.

A group of American doctors and experts reported in Washington that the question of hunger in this country has reached epidemic proportions.

These professionals revealed that over 20 million people, which account for 10% of the total population, go hungry at least some days in the month.

They also pointed out that hunger is more common among low-income sectors of the population, largely affected by economic difficulties and by the drastic cuts in government aid to the destitute.

The researchers then stated that this situation is the result of the Reagan administration's domestic policy concerning the food and aid programs to low-income groups, which had left some 35 million Americans on the borderline of absolute poverty.

This survey also concluded that although the hunger cases were not as serious nor as numerous as in Haiti and other underdeveloped countries, poverty did exist in the United States and had dangerous effects.

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The experts' document concluded that the situation of hunger is worsening, not improving, and warned that its effects will be translated into a higher infant mortality rate and an increase in malnutrition in children, adults and mainly the unemployed.

According to the Labor Department, the unemployment rate in the United States reached 6.6% last March, meaning that 7.9 million people are jobless, a figure that has been questioned by the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), because it did not reveal the real number of unemployed and underemployed in the country.

The critical and dramatic revelation made by the U.S. Congress on the poverty-stricken status of over one-third of the youth in this country, explains to a certain extent that, as the U.S. National Health Institute reported, every 90 minutes a teenager commits suicide in the United States.

This is the other side of consumer society. It is like seeing an impertinent young spectre jump and then rise up from amidst the Coca Cola bottle, the Statue of Liberty and Uncle Sam to denounce the real entrails of this way of life.

## IN NEW YORK SOME PEOPLE LIVE IN REFRIGERATOR-SIZE BOXES

**T**HE UPI news agency wrote an interesting article on the atmosphere in New York City during the noisy and festive days at the end of the year.

Dan Andrews, a UPI journalist passed by the large Grand Central Train Station and he interviewed at random three of the innumerable people who live in this place.

Their names: Joe 25, a gastronomic worker; Queenie, a vagrant that has all her personal objects in a cardboard box and William, a man of 57 who once upon a time made parts for the Steinway piano enterprise in Queens.

The men explained that they live there because rents are very high and that they prefer not to be taken to shelters for the needy because one of them said that one of his friends was killed there.

The reporter stated that during his small tour he found many vagrants and some Santa Clauses.



Describing the situation, the reporter wrote that one can see them going around outside elegant hotels such as the Plaza and Sherry Netherland on Fifth Avenue.

Further on he added that they live in refrigerator-size boxes around the building of the Supreme Court of Justice or among the columns of the Municipality building in Manhattan.

He also reported that in the central part of New York there are 14,000 destitute people concentrated around welfare centers, but government authorities don't have an estimate on the number of those who live in streets, subways and train stations.

However he stressed that the police estimate that every day over 8,000 persons are taken from public places to 19 shelters where they are forced to sleep; this is the largest number of beggars reported since the great depression of the 1930s.

It is estimated that as a reflection of the national situation, New York's black community is one of the most affected by poverty in this city.

At the beginning of last year, *The New York Times* carried out a survey among 1,329 people who live in New York.

According to 49% of the interviewees, the main problem is the delinquents who roam the streets and 42% of the interviewees are strongly in favor of "taking justice into their hands" to meet this challenge.



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Also 50% of the interviewees asked for the urgent reestablishment of capital punishment in this locality and four out of five affirmed that this is the most dangerous city in the world.

New York is known worldwide, among other reasons, because it has the largest human conglomerate in the United States and is one of the biggest urban centers in the world, and it has huge skyscrapers.

But if someone were to ask what its most conspicuous and traditional symbol was, then one would have to look at a proud and dominant image which stands on its territory.

It is a 100-year old monument, 46 meters high, and is the work of sculptor Bartholdi and engineer Gustavo Eiffel, widely known as the Statue of Liberty.

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## THE HISPANIC WAY OF LIFE

**A** GREAT part of the Hispanic community living in the United States is becoming, at a swift pace, the main symbol of the nation's paupers.

A report from the Census Bureau, with headquarters in Washington, pointed out in September 1986 that out of five Hispanic children, two live in poverty.

The paper added that, in the next five years, Hispanic men and women will substitute the blacks as the ethnic group with the highest poverty level.

The head of that Bureau, Robert Greenstein, explained that the difficult situation faced by millions of Hispanics in the United States is determined by their high unemployment rate and because, at best, only one of the spouses manages to find a job.

The report adds that contributing to this is the fact that the Hispanic population generally earns the lowest wages and that, furthermore, lately, its mean income ebbed 2.5%.



On September 18, 1985, *The Washington Post* warned in an editorial that the poverty rate was rising fast among the Hispanics residing in the nation.

According to the newspaper, the global poverty rate was 14.4% in 1984, but among the above mentioned social sector it reached 28.4% with an alarming rate of 52.2% among children of Puerto Rican origin.

Bishops of Hispanic origin living in the United States published a message where they warned about the growing deterioration observed in the living conditions of many members of that community.

The document draws attention to the constant increase of slums, which so seriously affects the Hispanics and calls on that minority to fight against the social and family evils which endanger our Hispanic and Christian identity, such as the corruption of public life, narcotics and pornography.

This situation, the observers recalled, was forecast much earlier by several experts.

On September 16, 1983, economist Fred Romero stated that, if it was not possible to implement a certain number of changes, the Hispanic community will go on facing serious economic difficulties.

New Mexico state governor, Toney Anaya, said that same day that the unemployment rate among Hispanics rose to 13.8% in 1982 and that it will worsen in the future if the government does not take urgent action to resolve the problem.

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Romero and Anaya belonged to a group of experts on work matters and leaders of Hispanic groups who were summoned to testify before a House subcommittee dealing with census and population matters which examined the role of that community in the United States.

A foundation with its headquarters in San Antonio, Texas, warned on April 23, 1985 that, if the budget cutbacks requested by the Reagan administration were implemented, millions of U.S. citizens of Hispanic origin would suffer "disproportionately."

The entity, called Southwest Voters Education Project, made public a study stating that the cutbacks are more severe for them because they concentrated in urban areas where there were social aid programs.

The head of that Foundation, Bob Brischetto, said that the larger cutbacks were implemented in the last three years and affected areas as sensitive as education, employment and job training which would be even further hit by the new restrictions proposed by the White House.

Other sources recalled that during Reagan's first mandate the social welfare and aid programs were reduced by 10 billion dollars and that, with the cutbacks requested by the U.S. president for the fiscal year 1986-87, only the cutbacks in

medical programs since his arrival at the White House would amount to 27 billion.

### *POOREST AMONG THE POOR*

That government policy has been strongly criticized by various sectors across the nation and identified as one of the reasons which account for the large extent of poverty to which the Hispanic and other minorities which also make up U.S. society are subject to.

Rather frequently quoted are the shocking results of research conducted by an eminent group of physicians and dietitians on hunger as a growing national epidemic, a topic which led to the title of a report they submitted afterward.

The renowned study, led by Doctor Larry Brown, from the Public Health School of Harvard University, lasted one year and its participants traveled to the remotest corners seeking the true face of the nation.

In their conclusions, which were made public at that time by AP news agency, the U.S. professionals asserted that hunger is on the rise, not the other way around; and that the recent and fast reemergence of hunger in the United States may to a great extent be linked to a clear and conscious policy by the federal government.

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One estimate from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce pointed out that, early in the twenty-first century, the Hispanics are bound to become the largest minority in the nation.

Now, with over 15 million members of that community, they can only exhibit the merit of disputing the black population the title for being the poorest among the poor.

Within two decades, with a human conglomerate much larger in their ranks, and the social troubles multiplied, will there be any trophy left for the Americans of Hispanic origin to dispute?

## BLACKS IN THE UNITED STATES: A SUBJECT THAT SHOULD BE TACKLED IN NEW YORK

**W**HEN the history of human rights violations is written in the twentieth century, one of its most important chapters will be the situation of the U.S. black community.

The heavy burden of a large part of its members begins early in life: before reaching twelve months of age.

The Children's Aid Society released a report in Washington at the beginning of last March and it stated that a black child born a few kilometers away from the White House had more chances of dying before its first birthday than a baby born in Third World countries such as Trinidad and Tobago and Costa Rica.

Black children who survive have another experience that will later appear in their personalities, because in the majority of cases, they have to adjust to living only with their mothers.

On November 5, 1986, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that in 1985, 60% of black families with



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children have only one of the spouses in charge of the children, generally, the woman.

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The U.S. black population surpassed 25 million inhabitants and, according to White House figures, if they were counted among the unemployed there would be a human conglomerate similar to that in two countries in the world: Jamaica and the Congo.

The Labor Department of the U.S. government reported on November 7, 1986, that 14.4 % of blacks were jobless and that black jobless teenagers amounted to 34.8%.

These circumstances force them to commit crimes to survive, then most of them are victims of racist judges who, for the same charges and similar crimes sentence blacks with capital punishment more often than whites.

The UPI news agency recently stated that last December there were some 900 black Americans waiting to be executed in U.S. prisons.

In a dispatch dated February 18, the agency released a report on that subject which pointed out that in states such as Alabama, 66% of the convicts sentenced to death were blacks.

UPI explained the ways used by the American executioners to carry out this mission and it added that execution methods vary from state to state, but the most common ones are the electric chair and the gas chamber. Some states use injections of poison, hangings and shootings.

But this brief list of misfortunes does not hide that, furthermore, the American black community

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continues to suffer from an illness which has lasted for 122 years: the Ku Klux Klan.

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This organization was set up in 1865 by white politicians from the state of Tennessee who aimed to control the south of the United States and later, by means of intimidating and murdering, managed to banish blacks from public life in the country.

Now its members are named after "Unified Klans of North America," "Knights of the Ku Klux Klan," "White Patriotic Party," and others.

According to the information released by newspapers, the Klan members are increasingly grouping in paramilitary organizations, bearing the confederate flag—symbol of the white south—and they have also replaced the old tunic with combat uniforms.

Commenting on the subject, the French news agency AFP said on February 4:

"Ku Klux Klan activities consist of appropriating material robbed from the Armed Forces and recruiting members from the military, especially from the Marines."

Further on, it added:

"Recently, five members of the Klan, one of them the head in North Carolina, were found guilty of trying to obtain arms and explosives robbed in Fort Bragg, planning attacks on banks and for the murder of a non-racist lawyer."

The American researcher David Lowe, who for years has studied the development of this activity,

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stated that racism persists in the country and the KKK is to exploit any situation.

An outstanding American jazz trumpet player, Miles Davis, stated last November in Spain that he had to admit that the South Africa issue was a daily reflection on black people's lives in the United States.

In an interview granted to journalists in Palma de Mallorca, after the end of a concert in an auditorium of that locality, Davis explained that on more than one occasion he had been bothered in his country for being black.

U.S. president, Ronald Reagan, conceded last February 12 that the acute racial problem dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries still prevails in that country

When commenting on the violent racist developments occurring in New York and Georgia, he said that racism in the north and south still exists in the United States.

During the session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council being held in New York it would be interesting to include the topic of the black American community, one of the most tragic social dramas, and to give it the attention it deserves.

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MESSAGE FROM THE U.S. BISHOPS:  
"SO MANY POOR IN SUCH A RICH NATION"

**A** CHARACTER drawing upon itself the attention from, among others, congressmen, bishops, artists and journalists has broken into the United States with unusual force: social destitution.

A curious public demonstration was staged last March 3 in front of the U.S. Congress, when members of that legislative body and well-known actors camped outdoors and in the street close to the Capitol's huge stairway in order to illustrate the conditions under which millions of the nation's inhabitants are living.

Two days later, and having been advised by its Speaker, Jim Wright, the House of Representatives approved an "emergency aid" program for the destitute in the United States, for which 500 million dollars were appropriated.

The relief program envisages the distribution of food, the establishing of shelters and the onset of psychiatric care for the homeless whom

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— according to the EFE news agency — several independent groups estimate to be about 3 million people.

The demonstration by the above mentioned congressmen and artists in front of the Capitol demanding help for those paupers reminded many of the impressive human chain which some months ago joined hands across the national territory in order to draw attention to those suffering from hunger in the United States.

That activity, held on May 25, 1986 under the name of Hands Across America, was aimed at collecting funds for those affected and also at making people become aware of the problem.

Shortly before that, *U.S. News and World Report* revealed that one out of every three black Americans and one out of every two children from that minority group live in poverty, with scant social and economic development prospects.

The weekly magazine also pointed out that unemployment hits one out of every two youngsters of that race, and qualified that minority population group as isolated persons who have given up all hope.

The magazine commented that due to their poor living conditions a great part of U.S. blacks founder in an endless vicious circle of unemployment, poor housing, meager social welfare programs, drug addiction and violence.

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Right after that, *U.S. News and World Report* reaffirmed its assessment — which appeared on March 25 — on stating that from two to three and a half million blacks live in extreme poverty in the main urban centers of the United States.

U.S. women prove to be especially hit by the socioeconomic crisis their nation is presently going through.

The Washington government Statistics Office conceded last March 5 that women are discriminated against at work because, even though they perform the same tasks as men, they earn less.

The Office recalled that in 1970 the average income of a U.S. women working full time accounted for 59% of that of a man, while in 1984 it was 64%.

Why is there growing uneasiness regarding that reality?

According to government data, poverty levels of families supported by single women with children are on the rise, because while in 1978, 57.5% of such households were considered poor, by 1980 the percentage had climbed to 60.9%.

Another of the sectors which certainly was in the minds of those who camped in front of the Washington Capitol's stairway is the American Indians.





One out of many examples might be useful to synthesize the panorama faced by that minority: the Samish tribe.

For thirteen years the 600 persons who make up that native community have been asking the White House to be acknowledged as a tribe as well as be protected as a human species in danger of extinction.

Last April 7, Lawyer Russel Barsh claimed that they had protested as a community of human beings against the government decision to withdraw their fishing permits and to refuse to grant them identity as a tribe.

A UPI wire dispatch said on that same date that the chiefs of the Samish tribe had gathered a 15,000-page document which proved that their community had existed for decades and is still extant.

That U.S. news agency wound up its report saying that they had also filed a human rights claim with the United Nations Organization, charging the Federal government with genocide for the way they are being treated.

Perhaps the brief account thus far will partly explain the reasons why the U.S. Catholic bishops asserted on November 13, 1986 that the increase in poverty nationwide has become "a social and moral scandal."

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Upon winding up their Triennial Conference, the prelates approved a pastoral letter entitled: "Economic Justice for All," where they state that only a part of the huge sums invested in the military sphere would be enough to remedy many of the inequalities which deeply anguish U.S. society

The U.S. bishops document proclaims elsewhere that the fact that there are so many poor people in such a rich nation like the United States is a social and moral scandal which must not be ignored.

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## THE HUMAN RIGHT TO BELIEVE IN GOVERNMENT

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**T**HE Reagan administration, whose credibility is melting away just like an icecream in the sun, proclaimed on several occasions its intention to set itself up as public prosecutor over the human rights situation in Cuba.

The subject was recently advanced at the 41st session of the UN General Assembly and during the meetings held in Geneva by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, venues where resolutions sponsored by the U.S. government were rejected by most participants.

The White House could not have chosen a worse time to launch this new propaganda campaign against Cuba.

Never, since coming into power in January, 1981 had the Reagan administration's words sounded emptier nor the seriousness of its arguments been so poorly regarded by world public opinion.

There are over a thousand examples to illustrate this assertion, but I will only mention three of them.



The National Research Center, with its head offices in Washington, informed a short time ago that in 1986 the number of Americans who believed that their government makes known incorrect or false data increased.

The Center's head, Roy Godson, stated last February 2 to the ultraconservative newspaper *The Washington Times* that several hundred persons were asked whether they considered likely that the Reagan administration purposefully used distorted information to deceive other nations peoples or leaders.

According to Godson in November 56% of those interviewed answered affirmatively, which accounted for an increase of 11% as compared to a similar survey conducted in March.

Just a few weeks before that survey, there was a sensational scandal in the United States over a disinformation drive on Libya, conducted by the government, by means of alleged "leaks" to the mass media.

One of the gravest consequences of this event, which brought about a violent protest response in U.S. journalistic circles, was the resignation of State Department spokesman, Bernard Kalb.

On assessing public opinion in his country, researcher Roy Godson expressed to *The Washington Times* that it seemed the U.S. people were showing increased skepticism regarding information issued by their government.



This view was corroborated when President Reagan appeared before Congress in order to read the traditional annual report on the presidential activity and offer its plans for the future.

The Spanish news agency EFE sketched the majority's opinion on commenting some days later that Ronald Reagan did not manage to convince the Americans in his State of the Union Message last January 24 through which he hoped to regain the credibility lost due to the Iran-contras scandal.

That point of view was endorsed, among others, by the results of a survey conducted by *Newsweek*, according to which the president's address dented his credibility or left 59% of those surveyed indifferent.

Afterwards, *The Washington Post* revealed the contents of a secret memorandum showing that the U.S. president has been telling lies regarding his responsibilities in the Iran-contras scandal.

An editorial in *The New York Times* commented that the White House had incurred in something worse than a mistake regarding the role it had played in that affair, because in its judgment, the White House had committed the worst of crimes: the breach of trust.

The U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Vernon Walters, had stated on November 26, 1986, that his government would begin a vast campaign in all interna-



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tional forums to obtain the condemnation of Cuba for human rights violations.

In this case, I think, it would be wise to advise him to talk about the essential human right to believe in the men who head governments and — if he can — to make sure that the people he is said to represent set the example.

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## DEMOCRACY IN THE UNITED STATES: THE RIGHT TO BE UNINFORMED

**O**NE of the darkest spots exhibited by U.S. democracy is the poor information most U.S. people have about what happens in the world.

For instance, the echoes of legends set forth over there in the wake of the October Revolution in 1917, as well as in subsequent decades about life in the Soviet Union are still strongly heard.

Last March 15, 37 Soviet citizens arrived at a hotel in New Jersey. Shortly before, the merchant ship in which they had sailed had some difficulties due to bad weather and they were aided by U.S. authorities who granted them provisional permission to stay.

After they left, the AFP news agency interviewed the hotel manager, Mary Ellen Leash, who referred to the surprising fact.

The wire dispatch read:

“ ‘It was a marvelous experience, said Mrs.

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Leash, who can't overcome her astonishment after realizing that the Soviets behaved 'normally.' 'They are people just like us, she said.'

Eight days before, the findings of a survey conducted by a research entity, the Strategic Information Research Corporation, in order to find out how informed the Americans were on international political matters were made known.

When asked whether the Reagan administration backed the "contras" or the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, 48% of the surveyees said they didn't know or answered wrongly.

Does the United States belong to NATO? Does the Soviet Union belong to NATO?, were other questions in the above mentioned questionnaire, but only one out of every three could answer correctly that it was their country and not the USSR.

The survey by the Research Corporation also asked the surveyees to give an example of a "major problem" discussed in the nations of Latin America or Asia.

About one third of the participants in the survey could not cite such a problem.

The survey included 2,427 telephone calls to adults chosen at random and 502 addressed to "politically active" Americans, plus group meetings in three cities and personal interviews with 13 members of Congress.



According to the final results, 64% of the participants agreed that Americans need to resolve their own poverty problems in the United States before turning their attention to other countries.

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The data in this research reminded the observers that, only a few months ago, U.S. politicians showed their concern for the ignorance exhibited by millions of children in the United States regarding very elementary subjects.

The Association of Governors of the southern states of that country pointed out last November 24 that 20% of pupils in primary schools is unable to locate the United States on a map of the world.

Before that, the president of the National Geographic Society, Gilbert M. Grosvenor, stated that U.S. youths are so bad in Geography that many of them cannot find Viet Nam on the map, nor do they know how to locate African nations with starving multitudes.

But these signs are not wholly new.

An EFE dispatch dated November 11, 1985 revealed the findings of a survey carried out among 10,000 U.S. students with an average age of 17 attending senior high schools.

Thirty per cent of them did not know the historical role played in the Americas by Christopher Columbus, a finding which has astonished and worried the teachers because at 18 these youths will be eligible to vote and become members of the armed forces.

The survey also showed that those students exhibit great knowledge gaps regarding the history and the literature of their own country, and half

of them did not know who Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin were.

Some months ago a campaign aimed at trying to do away with illiteracy was started in the United States where, according to government figures, one out of every three of its inhabitants is totally or functionally illiterate.

This is tantamount to saying that 27 million Americans do not know to read or write and that some other 30 million are functional illiterates, unable to fill out a job application, understand warnings against poisons or express themselves coherently regarding a given subject

The discussion of information in the United States took on a new tone on the wake of a meeting held early in 1986 between Coretta King, the widow of the black leader Martin Luther King, and President Ronald Reagan.

On leaving the meeting, Coretta told reporters that the president seemed to be a pleasant man, but not very much abreast of what was happening in the nation.

She said that she had the impression that in fact he didn't know what was going on in the country, nor how bad the situation was for many people.

A short time ago, when I wrote on the various rates of participation in the elections held in Cuba and the United States, a spokesman of Washing-

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ton's government radio tried to give me a lesson on democracy.

Based on the one-sided and false notion that in today's world there is only such democracy as U.S. democracy, he put forth the mass abstentionism that takes place systematically in that country's elections as a virtue of the system, the right not to vote.

Akin to that way of thinking, the cronic lack of information characterizing a substantial part of the U.S. people must be another merit of its so much publicized way of life: in this case, the right to be uninformed. By the way, for others this means a flagrant violation of one of the most elementary human rights existing on earth.

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## WASHINGTON, THE CAPITAL OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY "SLAVES"

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**O**NE of the most disturbing results of the growing deterioration of human rights in the United States is the alarming number of illiterates.

A short time ago, on April 10, at the closing of the 64th Annual Convention of the American Society of Newspaper Editors held in San Francisco, it was revealed that more than 27 million men and women in the United States cannot read or write.

The director of the *Herald Post*, Jay Ambrose, speaking at the Convention, claimed that newspapers are particularly affected by this misfortune and therefore are forced to get involved in the endeavor to solve the problem.

Another speaker, Arthur Colby, of the United Technology Corporation in Connecticut and president of the board of directors of an organization of literacy volunteers, claimed that if you are illiterate, your chains are not different from those that shackle slaves and, if the trend continues,



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there may be a time in the near future when one third of the population will be illiterate.

This critical panorama of American society had previously been discussed by the American sociologist Jonathan Kozol who reminded the public that the Gross National Product had lost 100 thousand dollars due to illiteracy.

In a speech given at the annual convention of the American Booksellers Association, Kozol emphasized that the Secretary of Education, William Bennett, had declared that literacy was not an obligation for the Reagan administration and therefore it was the responsibility of those present at the convention to fight in order to make the administration see otherwise.

Furthermore, Kozol who is the author of several books on illiteracy, explained that 40% of U.S. military recruits have a reading level ranging from fourth to eighth grade which obligates the army to publish educational materials in the form of illustrated short stories. As an example, Kozol explained that the military uses a five-page illustrated story to describe how to open a jeep's hood.

According to an AFP dispatch dated May 15, 1985 there are 27 million functional illiterates and another 46 million who, according to government estimates, can sound out words, understand them but cannot read fluently. The report went on to recount some of these people's daily suffering.

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Because they are ashamed, illiterates try to hide their handicap, using many subterfuges so that others don't find out they cannot read or write. For example, an illiterate in a supermarket may tell the cashier he has forgotten his glasses or ask another customer to show him such and such a brand of jam which he cannot find himself.

According to the AFP dispatch, *The Washington Post* interviewed Mary Ratan, a 39 year old illiterate, in order to find out how she went about her daily chores. She explained, among other things, that when she had to get from one side of the city to another she was incapable of reading the bus numbers and therefore resorted to taking taxis.

The U.S. Secretary of Education recognized in mid-1986 that the shortage of teachers is one factor contributing to the significant increase of illiteracy in the country.

According to a study carried out by this federal agency, in 1990 there will be a shortage of 1 million teachers thereby further debilitating public education which is available to the majority of students especially those from poor and low-income sectors. For the current school year, a deficit of 28,000 teachers was foreseen given that the White House policy regarding the education budget has produced a decrease in the number of those interested in teaching.

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According to the National Education Association, over the last four years the Reagan administration has diminished educational funding by 20 to 25% causing a 15% reduction in public school teachers' salaries.

The magazine *U.S. News and World Report*, in its January 12 issue of this year, claimed that the U.S. educational system was classified as one of the worst according to an international study comparing primary and secondary education in six countries.

The study took into account the opinions of 22 experts in comparative education who examined the teaching of various subjects, and Washington's poor results were evident even in the teaching of English given that this subject had the worst rating.

In discussing the reasons for this debacle, *U.S. News and World Report* claimed that one of these was the teachers' low salaries which in turn was causing a shortage of truly qualified teachers.

Many observers have commented that this presents quite a contradiction in a country where President Ronald Reagan, on presenting his 1988 federal budget proposal, asked Congress to approve 312 billion dollars for military expenditures, more than 5.5 billions of which are destined for the militarization of space.

But it is apparent that among the violations of human rights enumerated herein, another can be added: the censorship of textbooks.

Since the end of last year, groups such as the People for the American Way have denounced the censorship of textbooks which, among other things, support the evolutionary theory of human development.

This group, referring to attacks on the freedom to learn, revealed that the rise in censorship has become generalized across the country, both in rural and urban areas.

An EFE news agency dispatch dated September 16, 1986 also stated that these kinds of actions which affect freedom of expression are not just limited to those mentioned above, rather they include audiovisual materials and teaching methods themselves.

As an example the report refers to teachers being pressured into eliminating sexual education and drug awareness programs and mentions that between 1985 and 1986 the lawsuits to censor scientific and literary texts in general were successful in 39% of cases compared to 23% in 1984.

Of the numerous examples quoted in a report submitted by the People for the American Way, those that stand out refer to the censorship of scientific books that support the evolutionary theory. The EFE report concludes that the censors use

their scissors to suppress parts of books by Darwin, Homer and Hemingway, natives tales, everything having to do with space exploration and the life of Leonardo da Vinci.



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## REAGAN'S JAILS

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**T**HE United States has one of the largest prison populations in the world and the life behind the walls and bars largely contrasts with the misfortunes described in the fourteenth century by the Italian poet Dante Alighieri in his immortal work *Inferno*.

Some weeks ago, last February 19, the French news agency AFP said that executions in U.S. jails "... are a terrific lottery," where racial, political and even financial questions can determine the life or death of a convict."

Quoting a document on the same subject, the French news agency stated that in the United States capital punishment is implemented "... in violation of international treaties plus inadmissible suffering and carried out in a discriminatory way because more blacks than whites are sentenced to death."

Further on, the dispatch indicated that U.S. jails have a record number of 1,838 persons under arrest at present who want to know whether they will be

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released or sent to the electric chair, the gas chamber, or poisoned, hanged or shot.

According to a compilation of recent statistics on the states which make up the United States, among those who are waiting their turn to be executed, there are 33 confined who were arrested when under the age of 18.

The U.S. press has denounced that some young people in jails were tortured by the police before they were taken to jail.

For instance, the paper *Daily News* reported that four of them received electrical shocks and were beaten while in custody at the Queens police station No. 106 in New York. Since then it has been known as the "torture center."

Among the denouncers were Juan Rentas and Mark Davison, 17 and 18 years of age respectively, and among the perpetrators, Sergeant Richard Pike and policemen Michael Aranda and Loren McCarry.

The life in such jails was dramatically portrayed in the American film *Brubaker*, where the degradations of the most elementary human rights are exhibited in these repressive institutions.

The situation is such that AFP stated on one occasion that "... the death risk is three times higher in U.S. jails than on highways, due to overpopulation, promiscuity, and endemic violence in these jails."





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Robert Kastenmeier, president of a House subcommittee on courts and correctional institutions, visited the Federal penitentiary of Atlanta in February, 1986 where prisoners of Cuban origin are jailed.

The legislator stated on that occasion that inmates stayed for as many as 23 hours a day locked in their cells. At the same time he confirmed, among other irregularities, the lack of ventilation and the smell of sweat and urine in the cells.

Kastenmeier said that to keep human beings in such conditions does not correspond with the aim of our society.

Now that the United Nations Economic and Social Council is in session in New York, wouldn't it be appropriate for this body to review the critical situation prevailing in U.S. jails?

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## THE UNITED STATES: A BIG JUNGLE OF ASPHALT AVENUES

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**E** MOTIONAL instability and violence in the United States increased to such an extent that millions of Americans go armed to guarantee one of their most valued human rights: to live safely.

Last February 2, the results of a survey on this issue was circulated in New York by a group specialized on the subject.

According to the survey, three out of ten Americans have guns to defend themselves and seven out of ten claim that they should be entitled to shoot an intruder, even when he is unarmed.

The survey reported that 1,251 adults were interviewed and 70% responded that they felt safe inside their homes with a gun available and only 54% trusted that the police will protect them.

Five weeks later, an investigation carried out by the statistical office of the U.S. Justice Department showed that in the years to come a large number of inhabitants of the United States will continue to be threatened by permanent anguish.

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This government department reports that over 80% of Americans who now are 12 years of age will be victims of a violent crime in their lifetimes and that more than half will suffer this experience twice or more.

In addition to this the document added that it is probable that approximately 40% of youngsters in the country will be injured during an assault or robbed at least once in their lives.

The office, which based its projections on the average number of victims as determined by the national survey on crime for 1975-1984, also foresaw that seven out of eight of the children that presently are 12 years old will be attacked three times or more during their lives.

The forecast of the Justice Department ended by stating that one out of 12 white women will run the risk of being raped, while the average among black women could be one out of nine. Also, seven out of ten households could be robbed at least once during the next twenty years.

One of the sectors in which this social problem has been more acute is in the secondary schools of the United States.

The AP news agency reported on one occasion the result of a survey carried out by the Education and Justice Departments where it was apparent that 3 million students were victims of crimes in schools every month.

The report was titled "Chaos in the classroom: the enemy of U.S. education," and indicated that the majority of these cases were not punished and that the cost of the damages by acts of vandalism surpassed the costs of buying text books.

It also stated that black students were three times more vulnerable to being victims of crimes than whites, and the Spanish-speaking peoples two-fold more than whites.

Another problem which causes more and more uneasiness in American society is the wave of sexual abuse and rape suffered by American women and children.

According to a national survey sponsored by the New York Academy of Sciences, 50% of American men plainly admit that they could rape a woman.

The results of the survey were reported last January 8 in a seminar on aggressive sexual behavior and was attended by many sociologists and psychiatrists.

The expert David Finkelhor said on one occasion that other surveys revealed that 10% of the men interviewed admitted that once in their lives they had sexually abused a child, and only 1% of them had been arrested by the police.

In November 1986 the Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, based in Chicago, denounced that sexual abuse of this kind increased some 27%

nationwide during the first semester of this year, and that in states such as California and Georgia it had reached 113% and 102% respectively.

Some experts claim that this climate of lack of safety that millions of Americans face had become a related factor in the psychic traumas that force thousands of them to commit suicide.



For instance, last February 20, the Federal Health Agency reported that between 1970 and 1980 in the United States 49,496 youngsters of both sexes from 15 to 20 years of age, committed suicide.

Three weeks after, the Spanish news agency, EFE, reported that a wave of teenage suicides in the last three days had revealed the hard reality that in the United States approximately every two hours a youngster commits suicide.

The National Committee for the Prevention of Youth Suicides revealed in more precise terms that every hour and forty five minutes an American youngster between the age of 15 and 24 commits suicide and thus suicide is the second cause of death among teenagers.

The most recent cases occurred in Bergenfield 15 kilometers from New York, and on the outskirts of Chicago, where Thomas Rizzo, 19; Thomas Olron, 18; Cheryl Burress, 17; Nancy Granvian, 19 and Karen Logan, 17, committed suicide.

Larry Carlson, a classmate of some of them, told journalists that "... it is likely to happen again because there are many who are depressed...;" while others told EFE that before taking such a drastic step they would use alcohol and drugs to evade the kind of society in which they lived.

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## VERNON WALTERS' CHILDREN

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**U**S. democratic senator Patric Moynihan conceded recently that a great part of the children living in the United States face crude violations of their most elementary human rights.

Moynihan, while speaking last January 13 in Minneapolis, where a conference entitled, "Growth and Productivity in an Aging Community" was being held, expressed that his country has become the first society in history where the population's most affected group is children, to the extent that one out of every child lives in poverty.

Another senator, Republican Dave Durenberger, affirmed on the same occasion that those poor and poorly educated children of today shall become the unemployed and marginally employed of tomorrow.

Hardly 20 days later, on February 3, the Children's Aid Society informed in Washington that during the last years the infant mortality rate increased in the United States.

According to research conducted by the Society, in recent months more than 40,000 children died, particularly in the states of New Mexico, Texas, New York, Florida, Oklahoma, Arizona, Arkansas, South Carolina and South Dakota, because women receive pre-natal care "too late."





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The American Public Health Association reported that neonatal and postnatal deaths increased by 31% between 1982 and 1983, especially among blacks and Hispanics.

The Association, with a membership of 50,000 physicians, warned in a document it circulated late in February, 1986 that vaccination among children and adolescents is deficient and that only half of U.S. minors were immunized against poliomyelitis in 1983.

#### *DEFICIENT PROGRAMS TO PREVENT INFANT MORTALITY*

On commenting the above, Spanish news agency EFE reminds that "...the United States fell back to last place among the 20 industrialized nations with inefficient programs to prevent the death of children before they are one year old."

Another phenomenon expanding among a part of the U.S. infant population is physical deterioration.

In a UPI dispatch dated September 22 last year it was stressed that rickets seems to be reappearing frequently in the United States.

Later on it supported its point of view with opinions gathered among pediatricians from the Disease Control Center who stated that they had noticed an increase in the number of cases reported in specialized journals.

Among the children hardest hit by poverty in the United States are those of Hispanic origin, because as the news agency AP warned some months ago, poverty rate among their parents will very soon surpass the blacks'.

A report made public by that press agency revealed that over 2 million Hispanic children lived in poverty during 1985, a figure which accounts for 39.9% of the total number of minors younger than 18 belonging to that community.

In an editorial devoted to this subject *The Washington Post* claimed that while in 1984 the poverty rate among black children was 46.2%, for those of Puerto Rican origin it was 52.2%.

#### ILL TREATMENT AND SEXUAL ABUSE

A certain explanation of the fact took place on July 19 last year when the U.S. Census Bureau made known that the family budget of an average U.S. white couple is twelve times higher than that of a black household and eight times higher than that of a Hispanic one.

One must add to these problems the ill treatment, sexual abuse and introduction in the world of pornography faced by thousands of the above mentioned children.

The U.S. Journal *Psychology Today* said in its February issue that about 40 million Americans

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suffered some kind of sexual harassment during their childhood, and that a fourth of them may be suffering from various psychological problems.

The AFP news agency had said before that the campaigns unleashed in the United States against the violence and abuse the children are the victims of "...are taking on delirious proportions."

Later on it added that, frightened by what seems to be "...an epidemic of crimes against infancy — disappeared, ill-treated children, utilized with pornographic aims —, lawmakers set themselves to legislate in a frenzy."

Many times the life of an American proves to be extremely short — months — and in the end not even his parents will ever know the whereabouts of his remains.

For example, the "Coalition for the Shelterless" revealed on May 24 last year that almost half the children one year old or younger who died in New York between 1981 and 1984 were buried in common graves because their parents could not afford to pay for the burials.

A report by the Coalition pointed out that 3,070 out of the 6,500 infants who died, that is, 47%, were buried in collective graves in the Potter's Field cemetery for the poor on an island near Long Island.

Robert Hayes, a lawyer for the above mentioned organization, declared that is it terrible that an

incredible number of children who die in this city should suffer such poverty.

The state of New York grants 250 dollars to pauper families for burying some of their members, but the simplest of burials costs 900 dollars.

For some months now, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Vernon Walters, has been posing as a dear defender of human rights in the world, and especially those pertaining to Cuba.

Nevertheless, and curiously enough, he does not usually refer to the meaning of those human rights for millions of Americans, including children.

It would prove very interesting to listen to a speech, or to read an article by Mr. Walters where he would deal with the subject of those children, and then see if he resolves to denounce the misfortune scourging those little paupers.



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## CONFIDENCES OF REAGAN'S FORMER CABINET MEMBER

**F**ORMER U.S. Health Secretary, Margaret Heckler, shortly after giving up her post, conceded that U.S. blacks and Hispanics show the highest rates of serious diseases existing in the nation.

The senior government official, appointed as Ambassador to Ireland, made reference to the subject while reporting on the findings of research conducted under her since 1984 aimed at examining and recommending means to decrease the serious disadvantages faced in that regard by national minorities.

According to the report, those U.S. communities suffer from higher rates of cancer, heart ailments and diabetes than the rest of the population while, at the same time, they are the main victims of the murders occurring in the United States.

The homicide rate for black men aged between 25 and 34, asserts the research, is 7.6 times higher than the rate for whites of the same age group, and

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the chances of becoming a murder victim is one among 340 for whites and one among 47 for blacks.

It adds that manslaughter is the main cause of death among black citizens between 15 and 44 years of age, and that in 1983 the black population was the victim of 43% of the crimes committed nationwide, notwithstanding the fact that it accounts for only 11.5% of the nation's inhabitants.

The White House Department of Health research also reveals that black men suffer from cancer 25% more than white men, and black women 4% more than white women.

Likewise, the survey concludes, the cases of diabetes are "significantly more numerous" among blacks and Hispanics than among the remaining population, while cardiovascular disorder rates include twice the number of black women compared to white women, and deaths due to apoplexy are twice as frequent among blacks than among whites.

The former Health Secretary, Heckler, met with a group of journalists to make known the findings as well as her views regarding the situation they revealed.

According to her, cigarettes, alcohol, poor diet and obesity are clearly linked to the rates reported, and it is clear that we must do more and do it at once in order to inform U.S. minorities about the relationship between personal behavior and those threats to health and life.





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A UPI dispatch reported that same day that the Children's Aid Society, a public action organization, denounced that during the last five years the Reagan administration implemented drastic cutbacks to social programs aimed at the poor, and then in that study it ignored poverty as a health factor.

The same news dispatch recalled a statement made by Sarah Rosenbaum, head of the Health Division of the above mentioned Society, saying that the divulgation of the study conducted by Mrs. Heckler is not only plain hypocrisy by the Reagan administration, but also a cruel one at that.

A study carried out by the Policy and Budget Priorities Center revealed that the poverty rate among Hispanics increased from 28.4% in 1984 to 29% in 1985, while among blacks it went up to 31.3% that same year.

The Center's report, based on statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, added that a total of 2.6 million Hispanic children lived in poverty in 1985; that is, 39.9% of the overall Hispanic population under 18 years of age.

Some weeks ago, the U.S. State Department published its traditional annual report on the human rights situation worldwide, without, as usual, referring to the United States.

Upon recalling the confidences divulged to the press by the former Reagan cabinet health secretary, Margaret Heckler, on the onerous situation

suffered by millions of Americans without rights, the supposed U.S. diplomacy vigilance over the sacred human rights of others seems to crumble.

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## THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM IS ILL

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**U**SUALLY Americans blush when the subject of human rights and public health is raised in their presence. The reason for this is simply that in the United States, the greatest capitalist power on the planet, the fulfillment of this right with respect to millions of people fluctuates from the meager to the non-existent.

Last March 13, it was revealed in Washington, D.C. that 600 hospitals in the country servicing rural areas were threatening to close their doors between now and 1990 because of lack of funds.

Jack Owen, Vice-president of the American Hospital Association, explained the situation when he appeared before a specialized congressional group. He warned the legislators that numerous hospitals will have to opt for bankruptcy or the reduction of services offered to 35 million low-income patients.

He also stated that hospitals had a deficit of 3.5 billion dollars in 1980 and 7.4 billion in 1985 and that the major cutbacks in social programs imple-

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mented by the Reagan administration had exacerbated the problem.

This trend had previously been recognized by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare when it disclosed that in 1984 and 1985 the White House had only invested 8.9% of the Gross National Product (GNP) in the health sector which was one of the areas where cutbacks had been implemented in order to finance military projects.

The government policy seemed all the more contradictory due to the increasing costs of medical care in the United States which were often prohibitive for the low-income sectors of the population.

For example, with reference to government statistics, in 1982 the cost for medicines and hospitalization increased by 322.4 billion dollars as compared to other years, a figure representing more than 10% of the GNP for that year.

The Reagan administration's policy in the public health sector has been most discouraging. Last February 2, the Child Welfare League revealed in Washington, *D.C.* that the United States had fallen from sixth to last place among industrialized nations having the lowest infant mortality rates.

This report reminded everybody of the press conference convened by Marion Barry, the mayor of Washington, *D.C.* in which she was most distressed upon disclosing that the infant mortality rate had reached 21.2 per 1,000 live births, up from 18.2

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per 1,000, and that the infant mortality rate among black infants was almost triple that of whites.

Another aspect to this sad story is that there are insufficient medical services in the United States to care for emergency cases amongst children. This was explained in an extensive article by Dr. James Seidel in the American journal *Pediatrics*. He claimed that children are the orphans of emergency medical services in the United States and that the death rate among young emergency patients is almost double that of adults.

Seidel explained that this situation existed because of the numerous centers without emergency pediatric services, the lack of equipment and qualified personnel as well as the fact that many of these kinds of hospitals don't have pediatricians.

A short time ago the childcare issue provoked an argument between Reagan and a group of congressmen.

It happened this way: At the end of March the Population Reference Bureau, a private enterprise whose goal is to promote techniques which, according to the Bureau, contribute to family planning, circulated in the capital a document on infant mortality and illness in the Third World.

The report, based on a world-wide study and government statistics, claimed that 10.7 million children, one out of every eleven born in 1986 in

"developing" countries, died before the age of one and 4 million others before the age of five.

Furthermore, the document indicated that respiratory illnesses are the cause of 43% of infant deaths and diarrhea the cause of 33% and that the majority of these deaths could be prevented with proper medical care.

At the same time as this issue was being debated, Reagan requested Congress to substantially reduce the United States contribution to the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF). In 1986 the White House had assigned 52 million dollars to UNICEF but the President asked that this figure be cut back to 30 million.

Alan Keyes, the Associate Secretary of State for International Organizations said that the quantity requested for UNICEF, without taking into account the positive impact of its programs, indicated that this organization must share the reductions called for by Congress in order to diminish the public deficit.

Keyes spoke during a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee to defend the funding decided upon by the Republican administration for these international organizations.

An EFE news agency dispatch dated March 23 described the discussion held between the Reagan envoy and the leader of the legislative body.

"The president of the Subcommittee, Democrat David Obey, asked if what had been requested by

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UNICEF was an example of 'our leadership in international affairs,' to which Keyes replied that the budget had 'other priorities.'

'To give away more arms,' replied Obey.

Keyes argued that while the United States puts its finances in order, other wealthy countries could increase their contributions to international organizations.

Obey then requested that the administration use the same argument when debating its contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the case of NATO the United States had never seriously requested that other countries make larger contributions to the military budget."

The systematic cutbacks in the public health sector in the United States are contributing to leaving a large number of American patients — particularly the poor — impotent in the face of illnesses that can be cured.

For example, Congressional sources advised on April 7 that illnesses related to insanity will affect more than 7.4 million persons by the year 2040 if no measures are taken to avoid this. The report titled "Losing a million minds: Confronting the tragedy of Alzheimer's disease and other mental illnesses" stated that this kind of illness will soon affect one out of every three families in the United States.

After recalling that already 1.5 million Americans are suffering from this illness, the report severely criticized government policy regarding research in this field and went on to discuss, without beating around the bush, its uneasiness regarding the meager funding allotted to it.

A similar reaction occurred mid-way through last year when it was learned that the White House had decided to reduce the number of patients with access to a government program covering costs for life-saving heart transplant operations and to suspend government subsidies for medicines for those patients who had undergone this type of operation estimated to cost 100,000 dollars.

This government decision was made public on June 29, 1986 and specified that U.S. social security would cover the cost of heart transplants for a limited number of young recipients and at the same time would not pay for the medicines needed to avoid rejection of the new organ.

The health panorama is likely to get worse according to an eminent health specialist who has warned that there will be considerable reductions in doctors' salaries in the near future.

Dr. Gordon Moore, Director of Project New Pathway at Harvard University, announced last December 1 at a symposium on medical insurance that doctors' incomes would decrease by 20 or 30% before the end of the century due to, among



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other things, the government reductions in free medical services.

Given this scenario, it is interesting to examine some of the viewpoints supporting President Reagan regarding the importance given to dispensing with national social programs.

In a speech broadcast on radio on Saturday, February 7, the president claimed that the bitter truth is that the social security system amounts to a long history of disillusion.

Ever since the 1950s poverty in the United States began to diminish while economic growth enabled thousands to prosper.

Then, when the federal government began to spend thousands of millions of dollars on social security programs, poverty stopped declining and virtually began to worsen.

Reagan, in a broken voice, went on to say that he considered the United States a grandiose nation, with generous inhabitants, and very audacious in finding solutions to pursue these expenditures in lives and money. But in order to find solutions one had to adopt the old fundamental values which had helped to build the nation: faith in the family, faith in work and individual dignity and faith in the federal system of government.

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## ELECTORAL CANDIDATES IN CUBA AND IN THE UNITED STATES

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**O**NE of the biggest violations of human rights in the United States is that almost nobody has a real chance of being elected as a candidate in the elections that are held periodically.

The situation is determined by the fact that to be able to hold an eligible governmental post or a seat in Congress, it is essential to have huge amounts of money available to pave the candidate's way.

Last Thursday, April 2, a former U.S. Secretary of Defense who was running for the presidential candidacy in the 1988 elections, stated that he gave up because of the prohibitive cost of the electoral campaign. This official was Donald Rumsfeld, head of the Pentagon during the Ford administration and ambassador to NATO under the Nixon administration. Of course, he was not an ordinary American citizen.

In a message to his supporters, Rumsfeld stated that he would have liked to be a candidate for the

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nomination, but he refused because it would end just as Senator John Glenn's campaign with a heavy debt and without any legal way of paying.

A committee for peaceful action which encouraged Rumsfeld's campaign for candidate has the name of "citizens for American values" and last year it collected US\$800,000, now considered a very low figure.

This can be understood considering the costs of the electoral process in the United States.

In the elections that took place last November and according to the Federal Election Commission's statistics, the Republican party had US\$179 million while the Democratic party had US\$35 million plus US\$300 million collected by candidates of both parties among the interest groups which they would later serve from the Capitol.

According to government data, in the 1984 congressional elections, candidates invested US\$374 million, which amounted to a 10% increase compared to the 1980 elections.

For instance, the single reelection of the extreme rightwing Senator Jesse Helms, was valued at US\$17 million obtained mainly from private sectors who identified with his politics.

Eight months before the presidential elections of November 1980, John Connally, former governor of Texas, recognized that his chances would be

slight and he ended his campaign after having spent about US\$10 million.

Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy stated last March 18 that the financing of electoral campaigns in the United States is a bigger scandal than that of the Iran-contras and he led a group of legislators who called for reforms in the congressional elections.

Speaking before the Senate Rules Commission, Kennedy stated that the Congress is immersed in a sea of special interest contributions and therefore it was time to drain the swamp.

Kennedy concluded that an end must be put to the large amount of money devoted to especial interests which drown our candidates and parties.

In frequent propaganda campaigns carried out in Washington against Cuba, two arguments are generally present: In Cuba there is no democracy according to American standards, and human rights are violated.

Usually these ideologists "forget" that in the world there is a new kind of democracy, where, by the way, attention to human rights is by far superior because the quality of life goes up and not down.

In this context it is interesting to compare the experiences of Cuba and the United States, although now we shall only deal with the human right

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to become a candidate in the elections which take place in both countries.

While a Cuban candidate does not spend the equivalent of the cost of a cup of coffee in the electoral campaign, any American candidate spends millions of dollars to appear on television and to finance the professional teams engaged in this profitable business — called elections — in that consumer society.

For objective observers who know how elections work in Cuba, it is apparent that the candidates' chances are fundamentally in accordance with the candidates' personal merits earned during their working and social lives, as well as the services rendered to help the community and the country's defense.

The ridiculous legend "made in USA" that they are candidates "imposed by the Party" crumbles in the face of the undeniable truth that if the people want to elect non-socialist candidates, no one would prevent it, because that has been legalized by the Cuban electoral system itself.

Cuba, thoroughly respecting the human right to appear in the electoral lists without spending staggering amounts of money, sets an example for the United States.

It seems that the time has come, as it is being rightly claimed by the U.S. Senate, to exercise vital human rights for the immense majority of the pop-

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ulation of this neighboring country and prevent the principles set forth in the U.S. Constitution from increasingly becoming a dead letter.

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## THE DAY THEY CUT OFF OUR FOOD AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES

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**O**N May 14, 1964 the government of the United States banned all sales of foodstuffs and medicines to Cuba, a decision which virtually rounded up the economic blockade against our country.

Furthermore, in that way the solemn U.S. promise, that "for humanitarian reasons" those sensitive items would be excluded from the encirclement went down the drain.

This process of economically suffocating Cuba began almost on the wake of the January 1st, 1959 insurrection, and although a short journalistic article does not allow for a comprehensive account, a few examples are enough to characterize it.

Hardly a month after the triumph of the Revolution, New York's *Journal of Commerce* warned that the reforms undertaken in Cuba could have a major impact on the trade between that country and the United States, and other Latin American products surely would want a higher sugar quota in the U.S. market.

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Regarding the eventual economic reprisals Washington could adopt against the revolutionary decisions that were being implemented and envisaged, Fidel Castro said on February 4, 1959.

"If they take economic action, let them do it. We'll find solutions... let them not tell us that they're going to cut back on our sugar quota. The Cuban people, united, will find the way out of any situation, by making all the necessary sacrifices."

Late in June that same year, photostatic copies of a U.S. government document where instructions were given aimed at gradually blockading the Cuban economy were published in Havana, while at the same time U.S. monopolistic enterprises such as the electricity, rice and textile ones announced restrictions in their links with our country.

Five months later, the White House managed to make the British government turn down a sale of military aircraft it had agreed to with Cuba, and Cuba's response was that "...it would now get those craft wherever it could buy them."

In mid 1960, the main U.S. oil companies announced they were going to cut off oil supplies to Cuban territory and forbid that their refineries be used to process the crudes which had started to arrive from the Soviet Union.

On July 6 that same year, President Dwight Eisenhower ordered a reduction in the Cuban sugar quota, rejecting the purchase of 700,000 tons of



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already produced sugar, invoking the "U.S. national interest" and alleging the supposed fear that, in the future, Cuba would not produce enough on account of its sales to socialist countries.

Early in 1961, U.S. news agency AP commented that trade between Cuba and the United States had ebbed substantially in the last 30 days and was virtually at a standstill.

On February, 3, 1962, the U.S. government decided to totally blockade trade with Havana, although the White House stated — deceitfully, which is not the case of Nicaragua today — that on humanitarian grounds, exceptions would be made in this embargo regarding exports from the United States to Cuba of certain foodstuffs, drugs and other medical supplies.

Exactly 27 months later — 23 years ago —, the U.S. rulers decided to suspend all sales of drugs and foodstuffs to the Cubans.

A *New York Times* editorial, assessing this action, said back then that this was not the way to win the cold war against Cuba, nor the way to present to the world an image of the United States as a humanitarian and big-hearted country. The United States would earn nothing by further starving the Cubans, nor would it win over friends in Cuba by making them suffer for lack of medicine.

That stubborn policy has persisted over the course of time and, for instance, on April 16, 1985

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— anniversary of the Bay of Pigs invasion — one of the ideologues of the current Republican administration published an article in the *Washington Times* in which he boasted about the strengthening of that policy.

He is Mr. Roger Fontaine, who asserted that Cuba hopes to increase its exports, especially nickel. However, exports to Japan and several West European countries have been cut off because the Reagan administration bans the purchase of articles containing nickel from countries using the Cuban mineral.

More recently, on April 2 of this year, the U.S. House Foreign Relations Committee voted to authorize President Ronald Reagan to cut back the economic aid to countries purchasing sugar from Cuba.

Almost parallel with this action, the State Department refused to grant visas to a group of Cuban intellectuals who were to take part in a cultural encounter on the West Indies sponsored by the University of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican congressman Severo Colberg Ramírez, in statements made public by the Spanish news agency EFE assessed that action as follows:

“The spirit of retaliation still dominates in the U.S. government given its refusal to allow several Cuban emisaries to enter Puerto Rico, an action

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which humiliates the cultural spirit of the Puerto Rican people, who cannot make their own decision as to who should be allowed into our home."

The blockade against Cuba is already over a quarter of a century old, but thanks to the ironclad and indomitable will of the Cuban people, and to the solidarity from all progressive forces worldwide, the main choking aims of that blockade have been shattered.

Along the difficult road traveled over those years, the decisive and fraternal aid that in crucial times we have received from the Soviet Union has been exceptional, as well as that which it is currently providing us in every field of our national activity and that which is envisaged with even greater dimensions for the remaining years of this century.

Over two decades ago, the persistent blindness of Washington statesmen tried to defeat us through starvation, but presently, in spite of the difficulties we are facing, we are one of the best-fed people in the so-called Third World. The proverbial U.S. stubbornness tried to deprive our sick people of medicines, but since 1985 we have already fulfilled the international public health goals for the year 2000.

That action elicited among our people nothing but the most absolute scorn for its authors, and it also deepened their undeclinable will to fight and

put up resistance in order to preserve, among others, two essential human rights: the right to independence and the right to enjoy life, the same ones that, during the last 28 years, our northern neighbor has been trying to snatch away from us and thwart by all available means.











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- 27 million illiterates
  - 35 million functional illiterates
  - 7,900,000 unemployed
  - 35 million persons on the borderline of absolute poverty
  - 13.9% blacks are unemployed
  - 24.8% of Puerto Ricans live in poverty
  - 3 out of every 10 Americans own firearms for self-defense
  - 40% of American youths will probably be injured in an assault or robbery at some time in their lives
  - 1,838 prisoners in the United States are waiting to be executed in the electric chair, gas chamber or by poisoning, hanging or shooting. Of these, 900 are blacks.



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